

Sexagesima
St. Luke 8:4-15
February 20th, 2022
St. Bartholomew Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Fort Myers, FL
All Saints Evangelical Lutheran Mission, UAC
Myrtle Beach, SC
Pastor Jerald Dulas

To You It Has Been Given

In Nomine Iesu!

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit before Sermon:

Almighty and Everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the Earth Who givest power to the faint, and strength to them that have no might: Look mercifully, we beseech Thee, on our low estate, and cause Thy grace to triumph in our weakness, that we may arise and follow in the way of righteousness those who by their faith and patience already have inherited the promises; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever One God, world without end. Amen.

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ. Amen.

The parable in today's Gospel reading from the Evangelist St. Luke is more than just a story on where to plant in order to reap a good harvest. As our Lord + Jesus states in His explanation, the parable is about the Word of God—the Seed of the Word of God. The Sower went out to sow His Seed, and He was not concerned with where it fell, rather, He was only concerned with sowing the Seed of the Word of God. This is a picture of the Church. The Church sows the Word of God into the hearts of mankind, through preaching and the Sacraments, and it is not concerned with the type of soil that makes up the heart of mankind. For there are three evils in this world which always exist and war against the Sower and the Seed—and indeed it wars against even the plants that the Seed is meant to produce.

Those three evil things—the *unholy* Trinity—are the devil, the world, and our sinful flesh. In each of the instances where the Word of God is attacked and conquered in the hearer, one of these three enemies of the Word of God is described.

The first enemy of the Word of God is the devil. He is represented by the seed that fell by the wayside and the birds of the air devoured it. The wayside is the soil of the unbeliever and pagan; those who have nothing to do with the Church of God, and want nothing to do with the Church of God. The Word of God that is preached to them is quickly devoured by the birds of the air—the devil and his demons—any reason or sense that the Word of God may make to these hearers is quickly devoured by Satan, and they return quickly to their impenitence and unbelief. Such is the case when we try to convince someone that certain behaviors are sin, such as homosexuality and other immorality. Any wisdom from the Word of God is quickly dismissed and removed by the chirping lies of the devil, who swoops in and by means of the hearer's friends and other false preachers steals the Word of God away from the hearer.

Therefore, my dear friends, we must ever be on guard against the lies of the devil. For he desires to peck away at our faith, and destroy it with his lies and lead us out of the pure ground of the Gospel into the wayside where we may be eternally destroyed and under his evil reign forever. Watch therefore, and pray that the Lord may protect us from the Evil One, as we do whenever we pray the Lord's Prayer, which is really a prayer against the devil and his power. He is the one who does not want us to hallow God's Name. He is the one who does not want our Lord's Kingdom to come to us. He is the one who does not want the Lord's will to be done among us and upon the Earth, just as it is in Heaven. He is the one who does not want us to receive daily bread, let alone receive it with joy. He is the one who does not want us to repent or forgive. He is the one who is always tempting and trying us, so that we might have the seed of the Word of God destroyed. And he is the one who we pray, as the sum of all, who our Lord might guard and defend us from, so that we might live with our Lord and God for all eternity, and not be drawn down into the depths of Hell for all eternity. This is why we pray the Lord's Prayer often, so that we might drive away the evil birds—the devil and his angels—with their lies away from the Word of God, so that we might hear it and be saved. To us this prayer has been given.

The second part of the parable—the Seed that fell on the rock and withered away—we are told by our Lord + Jesus represents the hearers who receive the Word of God gladly, but fall away in time of temptation. This part of the parable regards our own flesh. The Word of God is not only attacked by the devil, but by our own flesh as well. One of the themes that flow through all of the Propers for today is the theme of humility and perseverance in the midst of trial and temptation. St. Paul in the Epistle lists a myriad of trials and temptations that he endured on account of the Word of God. We are inflicted with trials and temptations today as well. The theme of today's Propers is that the Church does not exist as a happy, clappy place where everybody is always full of joy, and never suffers any ill. The exact opposite is put forth by our Lord + Jesus, the Psalmist in the Introit, and St. Paul in the Epistle: the theme is that the Church suffers. It suffers trial and temptation. The sun beats down upon us, and those who do not have good grounding in the Gospel, are burned and scorched, and their faith is withered away.

In today's Propers we are taught by the Word of God—the Seed—to endure trial and hardship, and not only endure, but wear it as a badge of honor as one who has fought the battle and obtained the victory. And it should be pointed out that the temptation that is spoken of is more than just temptation to sin. Of course, that is a part of it. Allowing the temptation to commit sin, and ignoring the cries of one's conscience against doing a particular sin, will eventually destroy one's soul, for the sin will consume and control one's faith, and lead them down the path of eternal destruction, if it is not checked by daily contrition and repentance, and living in the Word of God and the Gospel. But the temptation to sin is really a small part of the temptation that is spoken of here by our Lord + Jesus. Our Lord is ultimately talking about the temptation to leave the sanctuary of the Church of God. That is the end result of trial and hardship! So much trial and hardship that is not comforted with the Gospel—the pure ground of the Gospel—burns out a person and his faith. Therefore, we again must be on our guard against the harmful effects of trial and temptation, by coming often to this house of God, and receiving the Gospel of our Lord and Savior + Jesus Christ, and the receiving the Blessed Sacraments wherein the Holy Ghost works to strengthen and sustain our faith. To us these things have been given.

The third seed is choked out by thorns. The thorns represent the cares and concerns of the world. We need to pay special attention to this, for the true evilness of the world does not lie in the fact that the world is full of evil, which is plain to see by the faithful, and is also something we must guard against, but the pure evil of the world is the way that it sucks us in by means of things we may not think to be particularly evil, that is, the cares and concerns of this life. The going about of our daily lives draws us away from the Word of God, and prevents the plant from reaching maturity, because the cares and concerns of this life choke it out. How many times have we failed to read the Bible or pray, or spend any time in devotion and meditation upon the Word of God, simply because "we do not have time to?"

We let the hustle and bustle of our lives and our world choke away the opportunity to hear God's Word, so that our plant of faith is hindered from growing and maturing.

Even more corrupting and faith-choking is the idea that exists within our society that we have to "keep up with the Joneses." That is, we have to have good clothes, a good house (and by "good" I mean socially acceptable), also a good family and the like. We even do this with the house of God. We say, "Our Church building needs to look like a church," when in reality the Church is simply the Word of God preached and the people who hear it. Where that happens is not as important as what is being taught and heard. Therefore, our Lord by these words would have us be content with the gifts that He has given to us, and not reach for that which is out of our means, and that which will not remain with us after we die. For the abundance of our lives is not lived in the stuff that we possess in this world, but in the gifts that our Lord + Jesus gives to us that last for all eternity—the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation. If we have these three things, all other worldly possessions are unimportant. Therefore, let us avoid the cares, riches and pleasures of this life, and obtain an eternal crown by steadfastly remaining faithful to the Word of God and prayer. For these things have been given to us for our benefit.

And this, our Lord + Jesus tells us, is the end and substance of the parable, for faith that is produced from the Seed of the Word of God, cannot come to maturity and produce good fruit without "patience." Make note that this is the word that our Lord uses to close His description of the parable. It is by patience that one is brought to Christian maturity. One cannot help but think of the words of the Apostle St. Paul in his second Epistle to the Church at Corinth about the sufferings and hardship that he endured with patience in order to obtain the crown of life. In fact, this theme of enduring suffering, and enduring the attacks of the devil, the world, and our flesh upon the Word of God flow in and out of all of the Propers for today. In the Collect we prayed, "Grant that by Thy power we may be defended against all adversity." In the Introit we sang, "Awake! Why do you sleep, O Lord? Arise! Do not cast us off forever. Why do you hide your face, and forget our afflictions and our oppression? For our soul is bowed down to the dust; arise for our help and redeem us."

This is our comfort, that our Lord + Jesus, even though it may seem for a time that He has left us to suffer mercilessly at the hands of the devil, the world and our flesh, does not forget us, nor forsake us, but instead sends us His help and redeems us. He is patient for the Seed to grow in us to maturity. He helps us by continuing to sow the Seed of the Word of God by means of the preaching of the Word and the reception of the Blessed Sacraments. Where the Word and Sacraments are preached in their truth and purity and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's command, there the Holy Ghost is working to create and sustain faith and life in us and is working to mature the plant of faith within us, so that it may grow and produce abundant fruit. To us the Word and the Sacraments—the means of grace—have been given to us.

Therefore, my dear friends, let us not be concerned, as some have erroneously taught this parable, with what type of soil we are, for this is not the meaning of the parable, but rather let us be concerned with guarding and protecting the Word of God that we received, from the attacks of the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh. For if we guard against these three, we will grow and prosper in our faith, and will produce the fruit of salvation by means of the Holy Ghost working in us. May the Lord Almighty grant this unto us all. In the Name of our Lord + Jesus Christ. Amen.

Prayer in Pulpit after Sermon:

Almighty God, merciful Father, we give Thee most hearty thanks for Thy divine Word, which Thou art pleased to sow as a heavenly seed among us, and we beseech Thee that Thou wouldst by Thy Word and Spirit make our hearts a good ground, guard us against the dangers arising from cares and riches and the pleasures of this life, and keep our faith from being uprooted by the blasts of affliction, that in an honest and good heart we may bring forth abundant fruit; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever

One God, world without end. Amen.

The Votum:

The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Amen.

Soli Deo Gloria!